

My Autobiography .. From Jimmy to Jim

Jim Greenblat

As a Canadian born just ten years after the Riel Rebellion, I can only lay claim to any fame in that a former Prime Minister of Canada, John Diefenbaker, always a controversial figure in our political life, was born on the same day I uttered my very first yowl in a world which would seem very unreal today. It was September 18, 1895. John was born in a log house on the prairies; I, in a pioneer Manitoba village. John has dined with kings and Queens. I did not, of course, but both our reminiscences might bear some similarity in context, if the reader will continue reading this. Anyway, both of us were born of immigrant parents seeking a new life in a free country. Then, this is my story.

My parents came to Winkler, Manitoba, about 75 miles from Winnipeg on the CPR's [Canadian Pacific Railway] Pembina line from *Govina Gibernia* in the Pinsk area in the 1890's to escape through Romania the harsh and bigoted religious persecution, in the Czarist Russia of those days. They were of the Jewish faith. However, lost in the obscurity of pioneer records in those days, I will never know how he and mother and their brood got out; nor how they got to Winkler; nor how he could finance a frame building, the lower part a general store and the upstairs where we lived, which was accessible only by climbing long outside staircase. I never did find out how this immigrant could speak English, German and Russian fluently as well as his Hebrew and Yiddish.

My very first memories in life were that I wore a dress skirt; that our store and home was directly across from the little CPR depot; that the station agent was Tommy Atcheson, one of the few Anglo-Saxons in the town, in addition to the Kennedys whose frame hotel was next door to our store. I loved that man Atcheson as only a little kid could, because he let me watch him work the telegraph key, handle the express cart for the train and gave me the odd piece of candy. Incidentally, Tommy later became Chief Agricultural Agent for the Canadian Pacific Railway. And, living with him was his sister, Lila, who later went to the United States and married the man who later, with her, started the famous Readers Digest. The original idea was hers I've been told, and she was the guiding influence for many years.

The village was named after Valentine Winkler, whose farm abutted the residential limits of the place which probably had a population of 400 or so. Strangely enough over four decades later, during World War II, when I was in Ottawa, I met up with one of the Winkler family, Howard, then a Member of Parliament, and stranger still, nearly three decades later, when I came temporarily to James Bay Lodge in

Victoria, BC, a retirement home, the manager was Wayne Winkler, of that family. And as I write these reminiscences in 1975 in an Esquimalat apartment, one of the residents is Wayne Winkler.

My early recollections also had to be of the Mennonites who traded at my father's store. They were among the first Mennonites who came to Canada, a Protestant religious sect. They favored plain dress, plain living, were hard workers, abstemious, and had left Europe for the same reason my father had. The Mennonites, who farmed all around Winkler brought in butter and eggs which they traded mostly for womens' dress goods, also head shawls which their women wore. My father apparently had a contract with Swifts, a produce company in Winnipeg and the eggs and butter were shipped there regularly. Later when my father disposed of the store and we moved to Winnipeg, he traveled the Pembina line for Swift's, buying butter and eggs from line merchants for shipping to the company.

While in Winkler my father apparently became prosperous enough to bring out a number of relatives from Russia, a number of whom later made a fine contribution to Canada and in the United States. At first they worked for my father, who started a peddler project. These relatives were sent out every Monday morning in box-like covered wagons filled with dress goods and household items, for which they accepted butter and eggs as pay.

Because Saturday was a Jewish holiday, observed in its entirety, those days, the peddlers always returned Friday afternoon, and we youngsters had to unpack into cases the eggs they had stored under the big box they sat on as the drove. I hated the stooping for hours.

When the Mennonites came to town I still recall vividly they sat around on the stone floor spitting out sunflower seed shells. This they were fond of as a delicacy and which they grew, and usually had pockets of them bulging. Father I remember always had a big round cheese on the counter and a big barrel of soda crackers from which they could help themselves. They bought King Oscar sardines and with the crackers and cheese always enjoyed a good lunch.

As most of this population was Mennonite or German, this I think was the first time Canada had bilingualism. I can well recall yet that in the little frame school we were taught mainly by a Mr. Neufeld. We had English in the mornings and German in the afternoon, or vice versa. Anyway I can still talk both languages fairly fluently.

In the evenings we kids used to sit in the twilight with our feet dangling from the high wooden walks, listening to the frogs and crickets in the startlingly quiet air. We talked about how high the moon was or something. No radio, no telephones, no T.V., no newspapers, no automobiles, just no nothing. We hummed music we had never heard. The world was blank -- and peaceful. But always there

was the excitement of knowing that tomorrow we'd go to the depot and watch the Winnipeg-Pembina express come in, loaded by our hero, Tommy Atcheson, a small man with a large mustache and a heart of gold.

Next to our store was the Kennedy Hotel, a frame building. I don't know who frequented the bar. The Mennonites never indulged, but probably transients and travelers did.

I can remember, young as I was, the tremendous excitement when a guy named Krafchencko, with whom my older brother Monte had played football with, actually tried to rob a bank in a town somewhere near Winkler, or maybe Winnipeg, I'm not sure, and killed an officer. He was hanged, Page Ottawa. Who thought of committing any kind of mayhem in those days?

The biggest building of course was the flour mill, where wheat was milled for the home made bread there was no other kind, and the wonderful smell of fresh bread baking in the hundreds of ovens when doors were open on a summer's day.

When father's relatives got over, some dispersed to other places. We finally had two other Jewish owned stores, one owned by my father's brother-in-law, Aaron Nitikman, and one by a Mr. Cohen; also the Quittenbaum and Loewen stores, German owned, all in a pioneer village. My youngest Nitikman cousin is now Mr. Justice Israel Nitikman of the Queen's Bench Court in Winnipeg.

At that age I didn't know anything about the centuries of Jewish persecution. When a Mennonite friend once asked me, a little boy in skirts yet, "Du Bist Ein Jude?" (You are a Jew?) it meant nothing to me. But I do recall that there wasn't any bigotry of a racial origin. The Mennonites were hard working, honest, kindly people, who had been pushed around in Europe too. Many of their progeny, in later years more modern and assimilated, have contributed much to Canada.

In those early days there was little change by Jewish immigrants from the religious orthodoxy which kept them together for hundreds of years, through the deadly pogroms in Russia and other countries as well. The few Jews in Winkler, 10 of whom over 13 years made up a congregation (minion) always gathered in one of the homes Friday evening to pray. The men wore little ornate silk prayer shawls and little head caps called *yarmulkus*. The women in shawls sat separately, just as Jews did over 2000 years. And they prayed, following the singing litany of an acknowledged leader who knew the Torah which contained as part the Ten Commandments. Everyone, young and old, always kissed the Torah as it was carried silently through the little congregation. A vivid memory.

At that time Saturday was a holy day in Winkler for Jews. I can well

remember as a kid that the fire in the kitchen stove was never lighted on a Saturday by a Jew. A German boy named Uhrich, I remember, who lived nearby did it. Mostly the Jewish people drank tea as they did in Europe, in a glass, whether at meals or in discussions which was then the only entertainment available. As they did in Russia they mostly all put a lump of sugar in their mouths, drained the tea through it when going down the gullet. They were all intensely religious folk those days, orthodox to the extreme. Many of the women wore traditional black wigs, believe it or not. I can recall later when we had all moved to Winnipeg, that my *meema* (aunt) Nitikman, father's sister, wore a black wig over her grey hair until she passed on. Most men wore beards my father a short, Van Dyke sort of thing.

Another centuries-old custom brought out to pioneer Canada by the Jewish immigrants was the *Mikva*. Behind my aunt Nitikman's house was a crude board shack which contained a large dugout filled with water, which was heated by hot bricks. Friday afternoon's ritual was that the women went to the *mikva*, cleansed their bodies and souls in the water, preparing for the Saturday day of rest.

Synagogues were for places like Winnipeg, but the Jews in small places in those days where they were so overly religious, gathered in homes. They believed solidly in God and if the Gentiles wanted to worship Jesus that was their business. They only ate kosher food. Meat came by train regularly from Winnipeg where it had been inspected and blessed by a rabbi. They all had separate dishes for dairy foods and for meat meals. Never the two were mixed.

When it became time for me to apply for Old Age Pension in 1960 I found Manitoba had no record of a James Greenblatt of Winkler. I wrote to the school board secretary there. Lo and behold, he discovered a dusty old school record book which showed a Jimmy Greenblat, aged 11 years, had been in school there in 1906. Rightly or wrongly, I have no other way of knowing. An aged relative many years later informed me that my first name was "Edil" but my father had a horse named Jimmy which he prized, so I was called that thereafter.

There was one doctor in Winkler, Dr. Weatherhead, with whom I formed a remarkable young relationship. I loved sports, always will. So did he. He taught me to pitch a curve ball.

Years later after moving to Swift Current, Sask., from Winnipeg in 1910, I went to school there, studied law after graduating, served in the First World War, and then edited newspapers there for some 35 years. But Doc Weatherhead's curve stood me in unpredictable stead against some of the first American Negro teams which annually toured Western Canada at that time. Included on one team I played against was a young fellow named Jackie Robinson, first black man to be

accepted into the then sacrosanct Big Leagues. But, they hammered my prized curve ball with gay abandon. But such jolly, well mannered guys.

About 8 miles from Winkler was another village named Plum Coulee. I know not why. Living there were the Rosners and Browns tones, also with general stores and immigrants. On a Sunday it was exciting for our family to drive there in fathers old democrat, enjoy a hearty Jewish meal of European delicacies and then home, all a day's journey. They reciprocated. Little Sarah Rosner and myself used to play while the elders talked and sipped tea.

Later in life Sarah married a Samuel Bronfman of Regina and Yorkton. He got his real start in life in the prohibition days, moved to Montreal and eventually the family owned the vast Seagram distillery complex and many times a millionaire. The family have about the largest liquor business in the world. Mr. Bronfman died only a few years ago, but I think Sarah is still living. Often when a newspaperman and in Montreal, I wanted to but was too shy to get in touch with Sarah Bronfman, now a noted philanthropist. Charles Bronfman of the family was instrumental in bringing Canada its first big league baseball team franchise, the Montreal Expos and I think its first president.

One of my first recollections in life comes back to me as standing in front of our store. It must have been around 1900. Something must have transpired as my father said to me sternly, "If you aren't good I'll turn you over to the Boers." What a memory! I remember, too, in a good mood my father giving me a 5-cent piece, a princely gift in those days which I hid in my shoe in case mother found out. Wasting a nickel on a kid!

We later moved to Winnipeg where we lived in a house on Alexander street, at that time a fairly uppish place for immigrants. This indicated my father must have done well in Winkler, financially, and now had a good job with the Swift Company as one of their buyers of butter and eggs.

Soon my mother died of cancer. I had gone upstairs from the dinner table to see her, and came down to say she wouldn't answer me when I asked her how she felt.

In Winnipeg I sold papers, and had an unforgettable experience. Believe it or not when we roamed Main street shouting "Free Press, Tribune and Telegram, 10 cents." Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Laurier was coming to Winnipeg. He was met at the depot by a multitude. I was one of the young kids selling celluloid buttons with his picture on it for 25 cents. Somehow I weaved through the crowd of notables and he bought from me a button. What a courteous, kindly gentleman, and looked it, with his silvery flowing hair, and said "Merci, mon ami."

After mother's death we moved to Stella avenue in the northend, inhabited by many ethnic groups. Here for the first and last time I was called a "sheeney and Christ-killer" by some kids. Outnumbered I got a bloody nose and a shock to my sensibilities. Who came to my rescue? None other than the then well known Spunk Sparrow, later a noted lacrosse and top flight hockey star in the only Western Canada pro hockey league of that era.

On Stella avenue my father met and married again. His bride was a fine looking, gracious woman who had been a governess with a family belonging to the court of Czar Nicholas in Russia. She spoke seven languages. Later little Al Greenblat was born. He is now living in Seattle, a graduate of the University of Washington, a 30-year man with Prudential Life, now retired. I visited him recently.

On Stella avenue near us lived the Irvin family. One of the boys was to become the sports-famous Dick Irvin, long time coach of the Montreal Canadiens and pro hockey player in his own right before that. His son is Dick Irvin Jr., whom everybody who watches Hockey Night In Canada knows as the respected commentator. Dick Sr. once visited me in Swift Current and his letter I value in my scrapbook. He came primarily to inspect one of his favorite hobbies at the Dominion Experimental Farm. His hobby? Raising pigeons and turkeys.

Yes, we had a family of six. As I write this, three of us are living. Florence in Vancouver, Fanny in Thunder Bay, Ontario, whose husband was a dock foreman and on a foggy morning rode his bicycle into the bay and was drowned; and myself. One brother, Monte, somehow became the Beau Brummel of Jewish Winnipeg of those days. He moved to the States, married a beautiful, popular woman in Duluth, whom I met when I returned from overseas. They moved to Bemidji, Minnesota.

They were divorced, he moved to Cleveland where until his demise ran a string of cleaning establishments. My other older brother, Sam, married the secretary of a famous early day movie actress, Pauline Frederick of the "Perils of Pauline" series in the silents. They, too, were divorced. I learned also he had been in Alaska but don't know if it was the Gold Rush that attracted him. Once, down East on an advertising junket I came home via Green Bay, Wisconsin to meet him for the first time since a little boy. He died there in 1969. The hospital nurse sent me his wrist watch, which was about all that he had left finally. Another sister Eva whom I remember little of, apparently died in Eastern Canada in a rest home someplace many years ago. So, the immigrant children of the immigrants from Russia to Winkler are still batting .500.

Again, strangely enough in the many things that have been strange in my life, was that near us on Stella in Winnipeg lived Engineer Russell who handled the train we had watched as kids going through our town daily. So I became a friend of and school chum of his son.

One day he took us both in the cab of the CPR engine, I guess against regulations, on his run. Returning that night I slept at Russell's. I wandered home the next day to find the house full of weeping relatives. My father, dead, was under a sheet on the living room floor surrounded by the traditional candles. Next day was the funeral. My father's body was taken from home to the cemetery in a plain pine box, unclothed. He was wrapped in a sheet and laid to rest in the earth. Flowers were taboo.

Thus ended the first chapter in my life. I was now an orphan. I was turned over to my uncle Phillip Silver as guardian and his wife, Aunt Mary. He was one of those for whom I had unpacked eggs on Friday afternoons in Winkler. My gracious stepmother and little Al Green left for some place in the State of Washington where she had relatives and later to Seattle and later to Vancouver, Washington.

Then my uncle and aunt in 1910 decided to move to Swift Current, Sask. to which region many of the Winkler area Mennonites had moved. Then began the more knowledgeable next chapter in my life. It was a raw frontier town on the flat prairie. It was much like a Marshal Dillon and Dodge City Gunsmoke film, following the Riel Rebellion. It had been basically a ranching country. But now the boom was on. The transition from ranching to grain growing was in process. The rail siding was blocked with cars full of settlers' effects and prospective homesteaders roamed all the streets. Many from such States as Minnesota, the Dakotas, Iowa, etc. I went to a little frame school first, then a cement block edifice was erected. After 4 o'clock I was busy delivering groceries for my uncle in a little wooden cart.

My third home, in Swift Current, was a most interesting place to grow up in. When it was proclaimed a city in 1914, it was necessary to show a population of 5,000. It was common knowledge that even cats and dogs were included in the registration. But such were frontier days.

In that small place we had, firstly, 8 banks and 8 Chinese cafes at one time in the boom. I remember Mayor Frank West telling me that once when he went to the Chinese community leader, Yee Gee, to collect a fuel bill, he was making out the cheque for him and asked "Which Bank, Yee?" Yee answered, "Any bank, make no difference." Only eight different accounts in banks. Those were the days.

One smallish man I'll never forget. He was Hilliard Gregory who was married to a French-Canadian Hudsons Bay factor's daughter. He came in to be a storekeeper when the CPR reached Swift Current in 1883. Their youngster daughter Martha was a classmate of mine, now living in White Rock, BC as Mrs. Bill Miller. Had the pleasure of visiting and reminiscing with her often when I lived in Vancouver for a while.

I spent many hours with Hilliard later discussing the old Indian days with him. He was one of the very few white men the Indians around Swift Current trusted. Soft spoken, gentle, he treated them well, even pulled teeth for them with pliers as there were no dentists around those days. At Rebellion time a group planned to massacre the tiny hamlet's population, but Hilliard Gregory was the only man who could save them and he did.

North of Swift Current, on the new Empress Line of the CPR, a farmer named W. T. Smith had what was described as the "Biggest barn in the world." It was 128 feet by 400 and 60 feet high. When he died I was a law student and helped work on his complicated estate, clerically.

One time in Swift Current's earlier days our local sports brought in professional hockey and baseball players, many of whom later became citizens of the town and farmers. They called themselves "Amateur champions of Western Canada", toured neighboring states. Among them from the East, Rosie Helmer, later trainer of the New York Americans (now Rangers). Rosie later moved to Calgary, opened a popular poolroom, where wife Stella still lives. He became a buddy of Red Dutton, who played for New York, later for a time was president of the National Hockey League after he served overseas. He is now a retired millionaire in Calgary from interests in mining, construction, etc.

I was earning \$20 a month in the law office, studying, so I became the imported athletes housekeeper, making beds and cleaning in their quarters over Ed McKenzie's store and got free lodging.

Soon I was starting to mature. I began playing hockey and baseball in school previously, under the tutelage of one of the finest men I ever knew, the school principal, Nelson Latour, later deputy minister of education for Saskatchewan. Everybody called him *Prof*. Thanks to him and Dr. Weatherhead, I became proficient in sports despite my size. Prof married Winnie Reid, daughter of pioneer merchant, Charlie Reid, who built the store above which our Swift Current Sun was first printed in 1903. There were no boys in the Reid family, so Prof changed his name to Nelson Latour-Reid. Two sons are prominent dentists and golfers in the province. Pioneer stock? You betcha. In 1970 I met Winnie Latour-Reid on a Vancouver street. Where off to? At 85 to her daily golf game.

After a couple of years my uncle decided to open a store in Irvine, Alberta and sold out. I refused to leave my new friends and stayed in Swift Current. With what little was left for me out of my father's estate, I moved in with Dentist Barber, who had quite a brood of his own, school mates of mine mostly. I think my guardian forked over around \$15 a month for my room and board.

I graduated from high school in 1913. Although I remembered that my

father told me of his wish some day I'd be a doctor, I instead became a law student in the office of Charlie Bothwell, town solicitor. He later became our Liberal Member of Parliament, subsequently a judge and a long time friend of the orphan he took into his office. I was paid \$20 a month. The other law student articled there was his nephew from the East, J.W. Howard Day. He was a brother of "Hap" Day who played with and was a long time coach of the Toronto Maple Leafs under Connie Smythe. Howard Day and I were long time friends.

Unlike me, Howard Day became a lawyer and after a captaincy in World War II, returned to Toronto, eventually became Chief Legal Officer of the Toronto Transportation Commission and did all the legal work for Toronto and Canada's first subway system. He once took me down into the labyrinth of the a-building new subway, scaring me to death, something which had the same effect when Hap Day took me through the new Maple Leaf Gardens and I had to walk high up perilously on the catwalk to see where Foster Hewitt made his early wonderful radio hockey broadcasts.

In 1914 the First World War started. Patriotic as hell, with Mr. Bothwell's good wishes I enlisted in a Swift Current contingent of the 9th Canadian Mounted Rifles (without horses), under a local dentist, Dr. (Major) George L. Cameron. His young son, Bruce, is now a dentist in Victoria. We trained there, billeted in the top floor of the Imperial Hotel, in a room with the tallest guy in the Canadian army, an Australian nearly 7-foot. This was in contrast to the smallest, a bugler, Tommy Wilkes a little over 5 feet, manager of a lumber yard there.

Somehow my uncle and guardian in Alberta heard of this and had me taken out as under legal age -- then. However, Kaiser Wilhelm had to be licked and soon Ottawa changed the age limit. I got another application form and went to Dr. Roy Stirrett, who is still living in Whittier, Calif., first home of former President Nixon. Doc took my official paper and said, "You look fit as hell, Jim. Get the hell out of here" ... and signed. I never even had to take off my shirt.

In the meantime the 9th C.M.R. left for overseas, and I cried as I watched the contingent of friends pulled out of the depot without me.

Win a war without me? Impossible. So, with two other local law students we took the train to Moose Jaw and joined the 128th Battalion C.E.F. I had had some cadet training in Winnipeg schools, so eventually I was made a sergeant. I had a swell life in Moose Jaw, until we moved to Camp Hughes (Shilo now) in Manitoba. Col. Pawlett of Yorkton was the C. O. Second in command was Lt. Col. Seaborn, a Moose Jay lawyer. I was a law student (big deal) so I took out Mary Davidson, daughter of the city's mayor then. She is now living in England and I was made welcome at many homes of the elite of Moose Jaw. Big shot from Swift Current.

In Swift Current there was a short, stocky and hard-fisted Lancashire lad named Nick Bretherton, who had married one of the Tillison family daughters. Despite his size he had been in the Provincial Police and in the RCMP. The Tillisons, from Lancashire, were related to the great Gracie Fields, then the reigning idol of the London music hall, and a big stage celebrity. Well, the sergeant in Moose Jaw's 128th was none other than my friend Nick Bretherton and he could lick anyone I was afraid of. Later in France he took on in a pub two big Australians who were annoying me.

Our fun and training in Moose Jaw came to an end as the outfit was ordered to Camp Hughes, Manitoba (now Shilo) for final training. It was a desert as unpleasant as the Sahara and as sandy. Then one day a cyclone hit, my first such experience, which scattered thousands of tents, us lying on the ground water up to our necks with the downpour.

Then we were ordered to prepare for overseas. It was thrilling. We were to be reviewed by the Duke of Connaught and the then Defense Minister and controversial, sometimes unexplainable Col. Sam Hughes. As Hughes and the Duke were lining up their horses near our regiment, of many, our Colonel Pawlett came charging up on his big horse and shouted at me standing behind my company rigid as a telephone pole, "Sergeant Greenblat, god-dammit, get the hell into your proper place" and galloped to rebuke others. Our distinguished visitors must have heard, as I said with red face, so the company could hear (not Pawlett), "You bastard". Our C.O. was nearly 7 foot, an English aristocrat of some sort and must have served His or Her Majesty in India or someplace.

We finally entrained for Halifax, boarded a troopship, then the Empress of Britain. Most of us had never even seen a rowboat, and were assigned individual hammocks down below in the smelly guts of the ship. Only one destroyer of the British Navy escorted us, but left us alone two days before reaching Liverpool. It must have gone off after some U-Boat. But we felt so all alone in that vast sea, but nothing happened except seasickness. Fortunately I was small enough and quick enough to rush to the portholes among the ailing first. But we sure were a sitting duck for any U-Boat.

We went to Witley Camp in Surrey by train. My first leave to London was an experience for a young country boy. I had to see Trafalgar Square, Whitehall, Buckingham Palace, No. 10 Downing street, St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, Parliament, Whitechapel and all the places out of our history books. Everything was blacked out at night, so we got into a pub one night where a charming young lady invited me to come up to her flat in Russell Square, which I did with trepidation. In the morning a maid dressed like in the movie Upstairs, Downstairs walked into the bedroom with a tray of breakfast and the morning paper. I was terribly embarrassed. It cost me a

pound, but it was worth it. A country boy living it up.

My last night on leave in London as I was preparing to go to Waterloo station for Witley, hell broke loose as a bombing raid started and I watched the anti-aircraft shells bursting around an early Zeppelin bomber in the many searchlights pinpointing the intruder. I learned later they had smashed up a bit of the eastend of London, near Whitechapel with bombs.

Out 128th was broken up to provide reinforcements for fighting units in France. One group was going to the 46th of Saskatoon, Regina and Moose Jaw. I gave up my three stripes and became a private again so I could go along and fight -- I didn't know what, but it seemed everyone was ready to fight. I wished later I'd never seen those damned trenches in France. And who do you think was a sergeant-major in the 46th when I got there? None other than friend Nick Bretherton. Before he got through he had won the Distinguished Conduct Medal and Bar, and the Military Medal for bravery. Nick came back, became a police magistrate in Yorkton, since died. But before that I had an opportunity to have one reunion with him there.

In my company it wasn't long, with the casualty rate, that I got my three stripes back and made friends with another sergeant from Saskatoon Hughie Cairns. He won the Victoria Cross posthumously, and a statue of him now stands in a Saskatoon park. A swell guy.

The first night I was in the trenches I'll never forget. They put me up alone in an observation forward trench to watch movements, if any, in the German line in front of us, until stand down in the morning and a tot of rum. It sure as heck was a scary and lonely night. Every once in a while a star shell would be fired from either side, lighting up the scene like a full moon harvest night on the Canadian prairies.

Another harrowing experience early in my France and Belgium days. Before long I was sent out of the line to attend a Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement -- and a fasting day) service to be held by a chaplain rabbi in an old barn back of the front lines. I was the only Jewish fellow in the 46th that I know of. I started out of the line of front trenches and came upon a narrow communication trench full nearly to the top with German dead, probably killed a while before in a raid and never buried. At least it smelled that way. I had to scramble over some 30 bodies with no else around, and that scared the hell out of me.

In my lonesome terror, I remembered years before that Jews at high holidays used to chant some prayer for the dead and I remembered only it started with the word *Yisgadel*. I said it quickly and got away from that horrible human mess.

I had one wonderful break and got to see Ireland. I was chosen with some others from various units to proceed to Oldham, Lancashire as instructors to smarten up the newly arrived Irish Canadian Rangers of Montreal. They were to go to Ireland on a propaganda trip because of the Sinn Fein trouble, which of course has not even yet been resolved. We had a rough passage on the stormy Irish Sea after embarking on a small vessel from Hollyhead, Wales. Arriving at Dublin, and wearing similar uniforms as the British we were roundly booed to our discomfiture by Sinn Feiners on the dock. They didn't know we were Canadians.

Besides Dublin we visited Belfast, Armagh, Limerick, Cork, Killaney. By the results it appears that trip during the first war apparently didn't do any good for peace in Ireland. But it is a most beautiful country with most friendly people, especially in the more rural areas.

In France we were joined by reinforcements, some of whom were friends from Swift Current, which had recruited the 209th battalion after I left. I was wounded in the arm with shrapnel in the Battle of Lens which is forward of Vimy Ridge. I convalesced at a converted gambling casino at a resort on the French coast, after a stop at a hospital in Bologne. It wasn't funny. German bombers came over the first night and their very last bomb nearly threw us out of our beds.

At this resort there were also Australian and New Zealand wounded and we had a grand time on the beaches. The wound in my arm, not so terrible, had long healed, but they finally got around to me and I rejoined the 46th until the end of the war. Besides the tragedy of war, we had lots of fun too, being young and full of zip. One of the reinforcements was my old friend and barber, Charlie Skeates. Out of the line for rest one day I asked him to trim my hair. So Charlie clipped half of my head of hair, refused with laughter to cut the rest. I looked like half a man, couldn't keep my steel helmet on.

We were lucky to be in Brussels, Belgium following the retreating German army when Armistice came on November 11, 1918. I heard Marshal Foch speak from the steps of the Hotel De Ville, city hall, to a tremendously excited crowd. We were kissed a thousand times. Charlie Skeates and I sat on the sidewalk trying to eat a mess tin of mulligan stew, really not realizing that the war was actually over or the importance of the occasion.

We were in the Army of Occupation of course, but never got into Germany being stationed near the border in Belgium at the town of Wasseiges. Here I was billeted with a very delightful Belgique family with a beautiful daughter, Bertha, about my age, and we taught each other the languages better. We were in the Walloon part of Belgium where they spoke French. In the Flanders part, of course, they spoke mostly German. My first taste of bilingualism. We lived close to the

famous Waterloo battlefield memorial, which I visited, with its tremendously big inside oil painting of that battle which went completely around the inside of the circular building.

Just before the 46th was to return to Canada, six of us were told our papers had been lost and the battalion would leave without us. They even had inefficient bureaucrats in those days. So I didn't get back to Canada until well into 1919. Discharged in Montreal, in a new civilian suit and some \$800 war bonus and pay in cash (most of which I soon lost in a poker game). I reached Swift Current, home, sweet home and Mr. Bothwell's law office again.

Thus ended Chapter 2 of the story of the little Winkler boy's life and the start of Chapter Three.

I soon found myself too impatient to study law, regardless of the fact that by my war service I could practice law if I could take the final examination. That was impossible, as by now I knew quite a lot about everything but law.

I forgot to mention that before leaving Belgium I was lucky to attend a special Canada Night at the Royal Opera House in Brussels, special train taking the Canadian boys. They gave selections from five operas and the star singer was a Canadian lady named Madame Edvina as I remember. I had a seat not too far away from the Royal Box and with King Albert and Elizabeth, his consort, who had returned from their enforced stay in England as the Germans occupied Belgium. What a thrill that night for us.

Back in Swift Current, still family estranged and little money, and having quit law much to Mr. Bothwell's disgust, I could have easily become a bum or criminal. Who knows? Then came a big break in my life when the parents of Ruth Cathrea, once a school mate, now living in Meadow Lake, Sask. where I visited her not long ago, asked me to come and live at their spacious home until I could make an adjustment. Brother Neil had been in the Canadian Air Force.

Everyone in town called them Mother and Father West. I really had a wonderful new mother and father! He was a big, handsome man, and became Swift Current's first mayor when incorporated as a city in 1915. They were Americans from Adams, North Dakota, and he had come to southwest Saskatchewan with partners and built the first grain elevators in that area.

Neil West went with Floss Borthwick, who had steno'd [stenographer] in Bothwell's office and we became lifelong friends. Her father was Chief of Police Borthwick. I visited them recently in Calgary on my way to Saskatoon. Neil came to Calgary years ago to become the right hand man of "Red" Dutton and still plays golf daily.

So I took a job with the Canadian Guaranty Trust Co. branch in town and wrote the odd sports items for Editor A. S. Bennett of The Herald. The other paper was The Sun. A. S. was a delightful man, a great writer for a small town. But he was a heavy drinker, and several times I sat up with him at the hospital when he had the D.T.'s. Even in the small far away frontier town, he was doing public relations writing for an Eastern consortium who were trying to get the St. Lawrence Seaway idea going in which they eventually succeeded.

One day Bennett met me on the street and casually said he was leaving The Herald, going East and was I interested in becoming the Editor. Just like that! "Sure" I said, and we went to Carey & Corbett the owners who agreed on his recommendation. There and then this tyro started on a newspaper career which lasted over 35 years. The Herald was a weekly, The Sun twice a week.

First thing the young editor did was start a front page column headed "Doin's in Swift Current", homespun, deliberately without regard to accurate spelling. It caught on quickly, and think it was the forerunner of columns in Canadian weeklies, etc. I also got contributors sending in news from district points. That was back in 1923, and I got myself some notoriety and many new friendships from among the many ranchers and pioneer farmers whose intimate stories I sought. This did initiate a historical record of that frontier area, once inhabited only by Indians.

It was tremendous fun being editor of a paper in a frontier town in the post-war period. Unbelievable characters were around and it was great writing about folks who didn't give a damn what you wrote -- even them. And I will mention later something of the many from there who made big contributions to our nation.

I found that the greatest Canadians are not guys full of so called charisma or money-padded or politicians, but the honest-to-God plain folks who don't necessarily have to be religious but hold to tenets of the Ten Commandments ... and work for a living not largesse provided by other hard workers.

We had great guys around. Like a fellow who came to town as an insurance agent who had a little office on the main street and where the gang, including myself, used to meet for poker sessions, tho' money we had little. He was Ted Peterson who later became president of Investors Syndicate, one of the large financial institutions in Canada. Now retired in Winnipeg, I'm sure Ted won't forget the old gang in Swift Current.

Then to town came a Winnipeg bucket shop (where one speculated in grain futures, etc). He was Mark Danzker as manager. Strangely enough he too was an immigrant son whom I remembered from Winkler. Imagine!

He later was an alderman on Winnipeg city council, first president of the Winnipeg Goldeyes, professional franchise in the Northern Baseball League.

Mark told me of a nice girl from Dauphin, Man., whom he had met in Winnipeg and who was then visiting her uncle "Ace" Buckwold who had a store in Cadillac, 40 miles south of Swift Current. Would I drive him out to see her, which I did. Not he, but I fell in love with Celia Buckwold. The next weekend, unbeknownst to Mark, I started out for Cadillac to see Celia and got caught in one of our sudden raging blizzards. I had to leave my old Star coupe and walk two miles with nothing but fence posts to guide me and arrived, very near to being frozen to death. I finally got home Monday taking a branch line to Moose Jaw first. But that Ceil and I were going to be married had already been decided on.

Amazing things have happened in my life and this was a classic. Without knowing it, or her before, Celia Buckwold turned out to be the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. Buckwold, Dauphin, Man. Her father was a brother of my aunt who was married to my mother's brother, Phillip Silver, the man for whom I had unpacked eggs in Winkler and who became my guardian when my parents were gone. Figure that one out for yourself. Her father was also a brother of Harry Buckwold of Saskatoon, father of Senator Buckwold, and there my son now lives. Her people came as immigrants before the turn of the century as well, and the business now run by Ceil's two brothers, Alf and Harvey, is now the oldest established business in that northern Manitoba town. Both Saskatoon and Dauphin Buckwolds have been wonderful relatives to me. Senator Sid Buckwold was mayor of Saskatoon 12 years, and Alf Buckwold was on the Dauphin council for 26 years and just recently a new bridge built there was been named Buckwold bridge for their service to the community, testified by a plaque on the bridge. I had not known of the relationship before. Thanks, Mark Danzker!

So, with no assets but my \$35 a week Herald Salary, it wasn't long before I journeyed to Dauphin on my editor's free pass. We were married in a tiny frame synagogue there. Immediately after the ceremony there, her brothers, a few friends, went home where I divested myself of the only tuxedo (rented) I have ever worn, even since. We imbibed a little to celebrate at her house, and for the next hour or so the bride and little congregation waited in some anxiety as the wedding dance could not start before the groom had the first dance with the bride.

Then with two passes we entrained for Swift Current. To my amazement, when the train pulled in, the platform was jammed with humanity. We had a second hand dealer in town named Happy Jack who collected stuff with a cart and donkey. My friends had this outfit at the station and the procession started up Central avenue with cars and wagons following. We got to the big home of Lawyer Herb Cathrea and wife,

the former Ruth West I mentioned. What a night! Harry Hein and wife Vi, now in Victoria, provided the music. About 3AM the party broke up, but Mike Healy, owner of one of the theatres, somewhat inebriated happily, refused to leave until the bride and groom went upstairs. As we got into bed, the whole thing collapsed with a bang. Mike went home. That's how our married life started in a frontier town. It was already 1926.

Backtracking, I had come back from the war aboard the big *SS Olympic*. Some of us were down in the hold shooting craps on the floor. The door opened and a voice shouted, "What in hell are you doing down there?" I looked up and froze. It was Col. Milwarde Yates, rancher friend from north of Swift Current; a handsome, tall blonde Englishman, a remittance man originally. He recognized me and we were home free.

This man's life is worth documenting. As this is written in Victoria in 1975 his name is in the telephone book here, living on Rocky Point Road nearly blind, now reaching 95 years. I met him first as a law student before the war. He was a friend of Mr. Bothwell's, then town solicitor. They used to go on roaring bats together when he came to town. They once decided that a Chinese gentleman running a cafe in town, "still wearing a pigtail" should have it cut off -- which they did. They were chased up the street by the irate Chinese with a butcher knife. That pigtail still hangs in his Victoria home.

Yates went overseas promptly in War 1, as could be expected, and was badly wounded in the head and left for dead at a casualty station wrapped in a canvas bag. A nurses aid passing later heard a moan. Yates was still alive. They put a silver plate in his head, early type plastic surgery on his face and later given the job of troop officer aboard *The Olympic*.

He came of an aristocratic English family. His father was a personal friend of Prime Minister Gladstone. Col. Yates is possibly one of the few if any, now living who marched in Gladstone's funeral procession, a boy holding his father's hand, and in the honor group. He grew up and roamed. He was arrested as a spy in the Spanish-American War, served in the Boer War and wounded, came to Canada and finally ranching out of Swift Current. At a Dominion Day celebration in Maple Creek he met the man who owned the Maple Creek Signal, a little weekly, bought it and brought the plant to Swift Current where it became *The Sun*, and he its first editor, and partner with his son, Bob Moore, until 1957. Price \$19,000 with nothing down, \$100 a month.

Sam left to live at Colwood, BC until his death. From a subscription list of around 1200 we soon brought it to 8,000 one of the largest of semi-weeklies in Canada. After 25 years Bob and I had a disagreement and he bought by interest in 1957, and I took over Public Relations for Pioneer Co-Op then expanding all over the southwest. After Bob

sold out to Lord Thomson and his chain. Had I waited a couple of years, it would have made a difference to me of some \$75,000. Well, so what?

Friendships, tragedies and experiences colored my post-war life. Our first child died at birth. Then Gerald David Wolfe was born in 1931, now an optometrist in Saskatoon.

In 1951 Celia suffered a stroke which took her speech and paralyzed one side during an operation in Rochester at Mayo Clinic. She was in a wheel chair for 21 years until her passing in Saskatoon in 1971 during which time I used up 38 housekeepers. Through it all she was the most cheerful person imaginable, beloved by many friends of home town and those we had made through the years in the newspaper field. At one time there were some 600 weeklies and semis in Canada, and I guess we knew most of the publishers and having fun.

Back in 1942 I got a letter on stationery of New York University, one of the largest in the world, marked "Office of the Secretary." The story: around 1910-11 a new power plant was being built in Swift Current and an American engineer, Ward Curlee, was supervising the project, and had a young nephew, Harold Voorhis, visiting him. We became little buddies, roamed the prairies together. By some crazy element of fate he had come across a copy, somehow, of the Swift Current Sun in the U library. He was now Secretary, later became Vice-Chancellor. In my scrapbook I have still letters from him about his rise to fame. At one ceremony, he wrote, he was given the honor of pinning the Medal of Honor on famous FBI boss, J. Edgar Hoover. He had had audiences with Mussolini and the Pope in Rome. Unfortunately when Ceil and I were in New York in 1939 at the World's Fair after a newspaper convention in Niagara, Harold and family were away on vacation.

I went to school with another kid, Leslie Moote, whose dad owned a coal business there ... before nuclear reactors. Les became advertising manager of the Manila Bullentin in the Philippines, and being a navy reservist got into World War II. He died on a Japanese prison ship. His wife and daughter came to visit us once, stopping off in Swift Current, though we had never met them before, of course.

I recently looked at an old school hockey team picture of 1912 and found only two of us still living, Johnny Sanders and myself. They live, he and his wife who is a fine artist, at Bowser, BC and I have visited them. John was the son of Bill Sanders, one of the old guard RNWMP [Royal North-West Mounted Police] who guarded the little ferry across the South Saskatchewan River, 30 miles south of town. I rode that ferry often till a bridge was built. Military supplies for the Riel Rebellion going north had to cross on that ferry. Bill Sanders was perfect in image, size and beard to King Edward VII. Off the force he came to live in Swift Current, opened a butcher shop. Roast

beef 8 cents a lb.

Strange? Recently Gordon MacMillan, a former general manager of J. I. Case Co. was at my place in Victoria, where he is now retired. An uncle of my daughter-in-law in Saskatoon, he said, "Why, my father once guarded military supplies for the same ferry."

So, let's go back a ways again. During the 30's drought in the western plains, one day billions of grasshoppers hit our area like a plague of locusts. The skies were darkened with them at times, even ate clothes off clotheslines. To add to the misery came a series of dust storms and ruined crops.

I recall coming back from the Worlds Grain Show at Regina, and started up Central avenue from the depot, my feet squishing sickingly into hordes of hoppers, inches deep on the sidewalk.

There was a little feed for the farmers' cattle. No grass, no grain. Many farmers trekked to other areas, many into northern Saskatchewan to start a new life. Depression, unemployment. But no welfare. Freight trains brought vegetables and eatables from generous Easterners. We even had a soup kitchen in town. Times were really rough.

In those few years, few farmers could pay for our paper. An unemployed friend, Scotty Shaw, we hired to take out his old Ford and bring in chickens, beef or dairy products from farmers for the subscription. We felt the pinch at *The Sun*, we partners drawing \$15 a week in cash so we could pay our staff. For groceries, Bob and I exchanged advertising with the W. W. Cooper department store for a while. And while Shaw brought in chickens and beef, our pressroom was many times gory with blood as we divvied up. Wonder if that could happen in this era?

Then came the 1940's, Hitler, and another chapter in my life. Food became scarce in Europe. Our power plant of 1910 had been succeeded by a new modern edifice. So, the old plant was taken over by the provincial government and turned into a horse meat processing plant. Cowboys and farmers brought in horses of every kind, and the meat was packed in barrels for shipping overseas to the hungry. Horse meat was better than starvation for people in territories ravaged by the Nazis.

The post-war period in Swift Current was exciting. My paper did a lot to put Swift Current on the big time map. Nobody sulked or whimpered about hard times. The formation of a group of young men into the Kinetic Club, to augment Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions did the trick. They organized Frontier Days now only second to the Calgary Stampede as big time rodeo every July. Riders of class play Swift Current and

Calgary every year. Our first affair was in 1937 when men and women wore old time costumes, the males beards as well. Frontier Days is now a major Canadian institution. I'm happy to have contributed.

And, Swift Current was the continent's guinea pig for the first Health Region, instituted by Premier Tommy Douglas and his CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] government, in 1946.

We had characters galore. One was W. J. McIntyre (Bill), a former farmer. He came to town and started a hide processing business. But Bill was an inventor although they thought he was nuts at times. He built a true to life and size mechanical horse which actually walked, was exhibited at Madison Square Garden, Toronto and other places. One day he walked into my editorial sanctum, as we were good friends, with a unique machine designed to shrink human corpses and make more room for the burgeoning population of the world. His conception doesn't sound too crazy today. I wrote Tommy Douglas and Bruce Hutchinson, well known Vancouver writers. The mechanical horse was written up in Time Magazine. The shrinker could be used in India and Asia now.

Claire Wodlinger dangled on my knee as a youngster, family friends. She became Aunt Mary on one of the CBC's first popular radio serials and married the late John Draine, known to all old radio fans who starred in the series of W. O. Mitchell's Jake and the Kid.

There was Bill Mawhinney, with whom I often matched quarters, a hobby with him. He became an executive of Massey Harris Co. in Britain, later married an Irish girl and they now reside where Shakespeare lived, Stratford-On-Avon. Young Harry Dickson, who could have been a famous golfer, was the first Canadian medical officer killed on the beaches of Normandy, on D-Day.

I mentioned previously the Tillison family, relatives of Gracie Fields. Even worse than war was the tragedy which befell them and the community. We had all gone to a Vimy Ridge dance one night and coming out ran into an unexpected blizzard. Five of the Tillison family were in their old Ford which started home, had to cross the creek, lost their way and the car went over the high bank. All were drowned, discovered the next morning. It was a terrible thing to watch Inspector Jim Taylor of the provincial police standing on top of the car with an axe, so the bodies could be pulled out. There was mourning in the old town. I ran to get an axe for him from a home nearby.

Strange things happen. One day while visiting in Miami, Florida, Harry Buckwold of Saskatoon, Senator Sid's father, came out of a restaurant. A man was standing at his car looking at the license plate. He said, "I see your from Canada. Do you happen to know a fellow named Jim Greenblat?" He was my brother, Monte of Cleveland,

whom I hadn't seen for some 40 years. Harry, of course, was my wife's father's brother in Dauphin, now deceased.

I have met many famous people in my life, or at least seen them. There was King George V, later King George VI, Wally Simpson's Prince of Wales, Churchill, Clemenceau, Foch, generals, statesmen and notables but didn't dine with any of them.

Once in Swift Current, 1914, when he came through on a special train, big-toothed President Teddy Roosevelt, who was hoisted on an express cart and addressed the crowd at the depot.

Then Lord General Byng of Vimy and the Prince of Wales passed through, inspected us vets at the station platform. Wales was one of the shyest guys as he spoke to some of us.

I heard and reported Premier Aberhart of Alberta in one campaign. I sat and heard Premier R. B. Bennett (later Lord Bennett) of Calgary and it was in our Metropolitan church that he uttered that phrase about King and the Liberals, "They've had their day and shall cease to be", part of history, political that is.

And we had a young lady, Elizabeth Clarke, who graduated from a local hospital class, came to Vancouver's Childrens Hospital and wrote that then tender hit song, There's a bluebird on my window sill. No one would publish it so she spent, she later told me when visiting, that she spent \$600 of her own money and it became an immediate nationwide hit. The proceeds she turned over to crippled childrens' groups. Her letter when I wrote a column about it and her thanks is treasured in my scrapbook. The story was in Time Magazine too.

We had celebrity connections galore. H. J. Pidgeon who owned one of the mills, was a brother of Walter Pidgeon, movie star of Good Bye, Mr. Chips fame.

I have a brochure in my scrap book sent by Dr. Donald Ross, once our CPR doctor. He went to Los Angeles, started and became president of the famous Ross-Loos Clinic, recognized all over the world. The late J. Gordon Taggart, first superintendent of our Dominion Experimental station, became an MLA deputy minister of agriculture for Canada in Ottawa, subsequently Food Controller for Canada in World War II. He was succeeded by Len Thomson who first came to Alberta as a laborer. He originated the PFRA [Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration], later was its Canadian director. Wed about the same time as I, we both lived in the same apartment house for a while, his wife and mine becoming fast friends.

I knew "Red" Newman, known by millions in World War I, starring with the famous Dumbells who entertained troops like Bob Hope did. Red was

a bellboy in our Empress Hotel before the war. Young Kenny Mayhew when he grew up became a dancing partner of Yvonne De Carlo, the movie star. He later had an artificial flower shop in Vancouver from where I last heard from his mother.

Mrs. Mayhew was a Ford before her marriage to a close in farmer. One of her brother's was Gene Ford, who pitched for Detroit Tigers when Ty Cobb broke in; another brother Russell Ford pitched for the New York Yankees, invented the *emery ball*. Walter once pitched for us, then went to the minor leagues.

I've been proud of the many kids I knew, most of whom grew up as should be. There was Bill Hayes, commandant in the Royal Navy who commanded a ship evacuating troops from Dunkirk, and once head of Royal Roads in Victoria. And fellows like Ken Thorneycroft who is now a Brigadier General in the Canadian Air Force.

Dick Sanburn, whose dad owned the paper at Shaunavon not too far away with whom I exchanged pleasantries and otherwise in columns became a war correspondent in World War II, is now editor of the Calgary Herald. Dick wrote me once he had found a copy of my Sun in a dugout in Italy.

Recently had a letter from Dr. Douglas Cameron, once young son of Dr. (Col) George Cameron, my first O.C. in the 9th C. M.R. The letterhead, get this, read: Dr. Douglas C. Cameron, M.C., B.Sc., M.D., G.M., B.Sc (Oxon), F.R.C.P., F.R.C.P.(c) F.C.A.P. Physician in Chief and Professor of Medicine and Director of the McGill University Medical Clinic, Montreal.

When I came in the earlier days, a friend, Roy T. Graham had a real estate office in town. World War I came. Roy joined, became a major, was badly wounded and came back home. He took up law, naturally became involved in politics. He hit the jackpot, was Liberal MP [Member of Parliament] for Swift Current; was Chairman of the Royal Commission on Gasoline Prices of that day; later was named Clerk of the House of Commons and then Mr. Justice Graham in Regina until his death.

The late Judge M. A. MacPherson was a lawyer there when I was a law student. I once debated with him in Knox Church on "Capital Punishment." He became as a Tory, Attorney General of Saskatchewan and married a local girl and moved later to Regina. His son is now a Judge, also.

Jimmy Bone, an early real estater became mayor of Belleville, Ontario, while Archie MacWilliam, lawyer and associate ball player was years later to become mayor of Glendale, California.

I'll never forget when in Ottawa, dining in the parliamentary restaurant with an MP friend, and nearby sat *Dief*. Only met him once years before at a political meeting. Finished, he came to our table and said, "Mr. Greenblat, and how is Swift Current?" What a memory and what a man!

When World War II came, I had a letter from Frank Prendergast, Public Relations head of Imperial Oil in Canada, who was acting for the Wartime Prices and Trade Board in Ottawa, then headed by Donald Gordon, who later headed Bank of Canada and President of the CNR. Would I consider as part of the war effort to come to Ottawa to write a column for the weekly press of Canada on national war efforts. I accepted, left home and became a steady habitue of the House of Commons with a nice office in the new Supreme Court building looking across on Hull, Quebec.

Later on I felt I couldn't leave my business any longer and sent out all my copy from home, with departments in Ottawa sending me their stuff first.

Shortly after that I was again contacted from Ottawa to come and represent the weeklies (CWNA [Canadian Community Newspapers Association]) on the Wartime Information Board. I had to do interviews for distribution to the papers. The first to be interviewed was Donald Gordon and I was quite nervous. This was mostly due to overwork developing a bad case of nervous tension which even a trip to the Mayo Clinic couldn't alleviate. They recommended I go to a ranch for a while, so I went to the Bar C near Kamloops for a while owned by a friend's brother Henry Cornwall. His brother Jack was manager of the Bank of Montreal in Swift Current.

But this was war and I had to do a job. But nervousness was hard to overcome in the crazy and complex world of Ottawa at War with Hitler.

I was there when Franklin D. Roosevelt visited and addressed a large crowd in front of Parliament. My pass from the RCMP to get close to the great man is still in my scrapbook.

Then occurred a bilingualism hassle. My column had been going out to the French papers translated. One day I got a letter from Ron Everson, of Johnston, Everson & Charlesworth, prominent PR firm of Montreal, an old friend of mine. He sent me a copy of *Le Devoir*, Canada's leading French paper. On the front page was a editorial condemning the government for sending out material to the French press by a fellow named Jim Greenblatt, from Saskatchewan, emphasizing my name -- which has a Jewish or German connotation. That too is in my scrapbook.

Ron said he had unsuccessfully tried to stop the uproar, but it

really was the government's fault. If columns go to Quebec they should be written by a French Canadian. So that is what they finally did. The WIB chief was a brilliant young fellow named Duncan Davidson, a protege of MacKenzie King's, now head of Carleton College. He did sympathize with me, but what could he do? As I look back at that particular editorial, I ruminate that I was probably the only small town editor ever to earn an editorial on the front page of that great newspaper. But I managed to survive, writing English.

I had a good time in Ottawa at that, living like a lord at the new Lord Elgin hotel. Those were busy days and you had to stand in line for everything, even meals. I remember at my table I often ate with other of the media, and sometimes Paul Martin, then MP for Windsor, now High Commissioner in London.

As I read the news these days, I somehow think that our present House of Commons hasn't got the political stalwarts of those days. There were priorities, leaders willing to take a chance, even if wrong. Most members had something to say and were not as subservient to the powerful, but sometimes inept cabinet who hadn't greatness in them. There were statesmen of stature those days. That's my personal opinion. Even the short, stout, mystic MacKenzie King seemed to have clout, but he had some tough guys in his cabinet. There were men like Jimmy Gardiner, the little Napoleon of Saskatchewan; Chubby Powers, Manion, Ralston, the omnisicent C. D. Howe and French Canada's "Uncle Louis" St. Laurent, whom King finally persuaded to come as his second man, Minister of Justice, then became Prime Minister himself. His Under Secretary was the likable but non-politician, Lester Pearson, with whom St. Laurent signed the Charter of the United Nations for Canada.

St. Laurent I met quite a few times. He was one of the mostly courtly and grand political persons I've ever met, not tough, beloved by all. To talk to him was an experience. Then in those tough days in the Opposition was the handsome Tory leader, George Drew, Arthur Meighan, that mysterious but articulate Manitoba lawyer, later briefly Prime Minister, Diefenbaker and others. It was wonderful to sit and just look and listen to them in action.

As I look back, and read for example of Trudeau's \$80,000 armored Cadillac to protect the august presence, I think of security in the King days.

In my job I had an RCMP pass which allowed me into many political sacrosanct places. I recall the day we were notified of a press conference in the East Block with Mr. King. I leisurely walked, and just as I reached the East Block a limousine drove up with the Prime Minister beside the chauffeur. Not a security man or Mountie in sight. King got out, the car drove off. He didn't know me from a hole in the ground. I might have been Lee Harvey Oswald. But we walked in

together discussing the weather, up the elevator to his office. A microphone was set up on his desk. Mimeographed sheets were handed us, a copy of a radio address he was to give to the nation. I still have mine. His expression didn't change. Then he spoke. It was his announcement that the first phase of World War II was over. Italy had surrendered to the Allies.

Security or terrorists? King wasn't afraid to die, for hadn't he often, as publicized, often spoken to his dead revered mother? He knew all the answers, did this man who ruled the House of Commons for 25 years. He looked anything but a tough guy.

Outside of the few policemen and guards in the House, there seemed a minimum of security. Of course in the public and members gallery no one was allowed to hold a pencil or make notes. In the press gallery, different, of course. Women, for some reason, had to wear a head covering of some kind before being allowed into any of the galleries.

One time the Swift Current unit was near Ottawa before going overseas and some had jobs in Ottawa for a while. Like Capt. Howard Day, Major Bert Cooney, the latter now in Victoria. One day I put on a party in the Lord Elgin for a few of them, ordered fancy food up to my room and like a millionaire signed the chit on my expense account. I recall Mr. Cooney and I walking up Ottawa streets to the hotel from the liquor store, each on his shoulder a case with quarts of beer. Who gave a damn? It was wartime. In a few days a bureaucrat from the Treasury department came to see me, gave me particular hell for spending the taxpayers money to entertain. It cost me. I wasn't getting enough for my work in Ottawa as a charwoman there.

Back to Swift Current finally. It was still my home town. I could still remember what these poor homesteaders endured in the early days. Terrible blizzards, often the Mounties coming to town in sleighs with a homesteader corpse frozen. I'll always remember the pioneers were among the most wonderful people imaginable, even if characters. To have lived among them was worth a lifetime of travail.

We left to live near our son in Saskatoon in 1960, a wrench from so many wonderful friends. Tired of even brief retirement, I spent four years writing editorials with Irish Pat O'Dwyer, wonderful guy on the Star-Phoenix; then we moved to Vancouver a few years on account of my wife's condition, and then back to Saskatoon .. and then, that was it -- in 1971. And now in Victoria, still writing, some.

But its been a wonderfully full life of work, laughter, love and tragedy; above all a great experience.

To end everything off in July 1975 in the midst of this biography I had a most interesting experience. Visiting in Dauphin, Man., with my

daughter-in-law, Dianne, we drove one day to Camp Shilo (formerly Camp Hughes) where my son Major Geral Greenblat was on a week's training with his unit, the North Saskatchewan Regiment of Saskatoon. Exactly 60 years before that I had been in training there prior to going overseas, to fight Wilhelm's Germans. On July 12, 1975, he took me to see West German soldiers training at the same place, an area leased to them by the Canadian government, with the most sophisticated armoured cars and batteries of guns imaginable, equipped with infra-red ray spotting equipment, etc. I saw nice, blonde young Germans roaming everywhere, off duty. What an anniversary! And a coincidence.

Its all been worth while. So for the time being, the story of a little boy called Jimmy from Winkler, Manitoba, whose parents were pioneer refugee immigrants from Russia, is ended. Now -- it's just Jim.

Epilogue

1975. Semi-retired between Victoria, BC and Saskatoon, Sask., my personal opinion is that those who decry the so-called "old-days" are all wet. To read the news daily, to hear the radio daily now is a most depressing thing. As I look at the myriad of automobiles, the electrical appliances easing labor of most everyone, the beautiful homes, the affluence amid some poverty, the incomes of young star athletes, stadiums full of patrons at big prices for baseball, football, tennis, soccer, gold, the keeping up with the Jones's, it makes one wonder why everyone seems to have forgotten those hardy pioneers in log shacks in Canada who made all this possible. I wish they'd stop crying. But maybe chaos and inflation and depression had to come to teach us a lesson. Violence rampant, jails full, humans, some of whom are worse than animals. Some inept governments by power-inflated politicians, some of whom should be washing dishes in a hotel. Highly paid bureaucracies and power-drunk politicians who should know better. Big Brother knows everything better. Israel vs Arabs. Catholics and Protestants in Ireland and Amins in Uganda. Strikes and more strikes. AND THAT'S IT!